

MEMORADUM FOR Faculty Advisor, Group Room M04, Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Soviet / Afghanistan War

1. Thesis Statement. American policies in Afghanistan led to the tragic events that took place in the United States on the morning of September 11, 2001.
2. Discussion. In its Cold War struggle against Stalinism, the United States organized a civil war in Afghanistan to drive out the USSR. The United States was a key force in the initial formation, organizing, financing, arming, and training of the Islamic Fundamentalist guerillas, to include the Taliban in Afghanistan.
3. Conclusion. The successful September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and damaged the Pentagon, killing over 3,000 people combined. The attack was one of the most pivotal events in world history, and its impact will be felt for years to come. The US involvement in Afghanistan had a clear impact on the Taliban and Al Queda in Afghanistan.
4. Counterpoint. The terrorist attacks were a measure of the depth of anger in the Middle East and many other parts of the world towards the United States. There is tremendous anger throughout the Arab world over the decade-long US-backed sanctions against Iraq.
5. Haines Award. We (do/~~do not~~) request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in research. *Writing Research Papers*, 10th Edition by James D. Lester, is the guide used in the preparation of this research paper.

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America under Attack:
Afghanistan and the outcome of 9/11

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Outline

Thesis: American policies in Afghanistan led to the tragic events that took place in the United States on the morning of September 11, 2001.

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On September 11, 2001, international terrorism acts caused the most devastating instant human toll on record, outside of war. It was a beautiful morning in New York until an airplane hit near the top of the north tower of the World Trade Center; it was 8:45 a.m. At 9:03 a.m., a second airliner came in from the Jersey side, crossing New York Bay to crash into the World Trade's south tower. Twenty-five minutes after the second tower was hit, another airliner crashed into the Pentagon in Washington. Half an hour later, an airliner crashed in rural Pennsylvania. America was under attack. It took only a day for U.S. intelligence to identify many of the terrorists and to confirm their connection to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization. The CIA, FBI, and NSA intercepted data prior to the attack that had revealed that something was about to happen; they just hadn't known what, where, or how big (Tanner 289-292). It was only after the attacks that all the pieces came together. American policies in Afghanistan led to the tragic events that took place in the United States on the morning of September 11, 2001.

The threat of international terrorism is surely severe. In order to understand how American policies in Afghanistan led to the events of 9/11, it is important to assess the following: the background leading to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Response to the Soviet Invasion, the American involvement in Afghanistan, and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In 1933, at the age of 19, Zahir Shah ascended the throne after his father was assassinated. During his reign Afghanistan enjoyed a period of stability. Zahir Shah brought in foreign advisers, founded the first modern university, and fostered cultural and commercial relations with Europe. In 1964, a new constitution transformed Afghanistan

into a modern democracy, with free elections, a parliament, civil rights, emancipation for women and universal suffrage (Chomsky).

In 1953, Mohammad Daoud, first cousin and brother-in-law to Afghan King Mohammad Zahir Shah, took over as Prime Minister of Afghanistan. At that time, his economic policy and his goal to modernize the economy and military had profound impacts on the relations with the world's two superpowers; the United States and Russia. While the USSR took advantage of the situation, the relationship between the US and Afghanistan suffered by mistakes, misunderstandings and a lack of appreciation for the interests of the two parties (Majid).

Mohammad Daoud was well known among the Afghans and had a reputation for his drive and energy. His policies were aimed to achieve three goals: economic modernization and development of Afghanistan, aggressive pursuit of the Pushtunistan policy, and strengthening and modernization of the Afghan armed forces. He adopted a policy where the Afghan government moved closer to the Soviet Union, attracting large sums of Eastern bloc aid (Majid). The Soviet government appeared prepared to increase substantially its material assistance to Afghanistan and to support the Afghan government on political issues (Adamec 266). Mohammad Daoud hoped that the American government would increase their aid, fostering Soviet-American competition in the country. The United States had very good relations with the previous prime ministers, but did not know how to interpret Daoud Khan's policy changes.

On 25 June 1973, King Zahir Shah left for eye treatment and the medicine mud baths in Italy. Before dawn on 17 July, a small group of officers leading several hundred troops seized the palace in downtown Kabul, the radio station and other key positions

(Bradsher 56). The coup was orchestrated by his cousin, Mohammad Daoud, whom opposed his efforts to open up the country and develop contacts with the West. Western journalists speculated that the Daoud coup was procommunist not only because of his good relationship with the Soviets during his decade as prime minister but also because of the evident support of the coup by elements of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) (Nyrop and Seekins 68). Since the coup, Zahir Shah, the last monarch of a 200-year old dynasty had lived quietly in a villa outside Rome. A promising development occurred in April 2002, when King Zahir returned to his country after living in exile for nearly thirty years (Tanner 328).

Following the removal of Zahir Shah, Afghanistan descended into factional violence and war. In 1947, when Pakistan was created, it declared the Durand Line to be its international boundary with Afghanistan. The Afghan government took a strong stand against the newly formed government of Pakistan and ever since then the relations between the two nations worsened through continuing propaganda wars, Pakistani blocking of transit goods to landlocked Afghanistan and provocation of tribal sentiments against the Pakistanis by the Afghans (Kakar). Daoud, who was always an advocate of the Pushtunistan issue, made the issue one of the major goals of his administration.

The USSR encouraged the masterly maneuvered the Daoud regime to go after the Pakistanis over this issue by open support of the Afghan stand and by pouring in military and economic aid as well as opening up new transit routes for Afghan goods to avoid Pakistani measures. The American took the side of Pakistan over this issue and embarrassed the Afghans, who were not asking for American support over this contentious issue, but for their neutral stand and an objective mediator (Majid).

In 1975, Daoud established his own political party, the National Revolutionary Party, which was to be the focus of all political activity (Nyrop and Seekins 69). The elite officer corps indulged in political conflict. Daoud and other members of the royal family had their loyal factions, and members of the PDPA were divided into the Khalq and Parcham factions (Nyrop and Seekins 295). By 1977, the Soviet Union had provided Afghanistan with the equivalent of US\$600 million in military equipment. It was necessary to send 3,700 officers and NCOs to the Soviet Union to teach them to use the sophisticated hardware.

Daoud's ties with the Soviet Union, like his relations with Afghan communist, deteriorated during the five years of his presidency (Nyrop and Seekins 71). In April 1977, the Soviets were aware of Daoud's removal of Soviet advisers from some Afghan military units and his diversification of Afghan military training.

On April 17, 1977, a crisis arose out of the political assassination of Mir Akbar Khyber, theoretician and writer of the Parcham faction. There has never been any proof of the identity of the killers. But, in Kabul, the assassination was immediately seized upon as proof positive of American interference, and massive demonstration were held two days later, at the burial, estimated as up to 15,000. The focus was on the US embassy, where slogans were shouted against the CIA (Hyman 75-76). The army had been put on alert on April 26 because of a presumed "anti-Islamic" coup. On April 27, 1978, the coup began with troop movements at the military base in Kabul International Airport. It developed slowly over the next 24 hours as the rebels battled units loyal to Daoud in and around the capital. Daoud and most of his family were shot in the Presidential Palace on April 28 (Nyrop and Seekins 73). Ahmad Shah and his

descendants had ruled for two hundred and thirty-one years; it had ended. It was not clear what kind of regime had succeeded them.

The Marxist military officers immediately handed power to the PDPA, which proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Taraki (the head of Khalq) was made president and Karmal (Parcham) was given the position of deputy premier (Tanner 231). The success of the coup was called the April (Saur) Revolution.

From the beginning, the PDPA leadership announced that its policies would be based on “defense of the principles of Islam, democracy, freedom and inviolability of the person.” However, at a government rally in Kabul in October, the new Afghan flag was revealed. The traditional green came down and up went the new color; red (Tanner 231).

Revolts broke out everywhere. The PDPA responded with mass arrests and executions, and the Afghan army soldiers began to desert by the thousands. In February, 1979, Adolf Dubs, the American ambassador was kidnapped, and against U.S. wishes, Afghan troops advised by the KGB burst into the Kabul hotel where he was being held, killing not only the criminals but the ambassador (Tanner 231-232). Violent demonstrations erupted the following month in Herat. Instead of the Afghan army's 17th Division quelling the riots, it mutinied en masse. The rebels held the city for three days, plundering weapons stockpiles and hunting down government officials. The rebels also decapitated Soviet heads and paraded them around the city on poles. Loyal forces from Kandahar cordoned off the city and two armored brigades from Kabul were dispatched. The 17th Division Headquarters, along with parts of Herat were hit with IL-28 bombers from Shindand airbase. As many as five thousand people had died, including one hundred Soviet advisers and their families when the rebellion was crushed (Tanner 232).

The news of the events in Herat accelerated desertions and mutinies in the Afghan armed forces. The Soviets upped their military aid and Soviet advisers in the country numbered in the thousands. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security advisor convinced the president to sanction some initial aid to the Afghan rebels, which set off alarm bells in the Kremlin that the United States was stepping into the conflict (Tanner 233).

On Christmas Eve, 1979, elite Soviet forces began flying into Kabul airport and the military airbase at Bagram. The Soviets were invading Afghanistan. The Soviets sent troops into Afghanistan for a number of reasons. They wanted to expand their influence in Asia and preserve the Communist government that had been established in the 1970s. The Soviets also wanted to protect their interests in Afghanistan from Iran and western nations.

Six years later, an estimated 115,000 Soviet military personnel continued to wage war against the Afghan people (Nyrop and Seekins xi). However, they were met with fierce resistance when they ventured out of their strongholds into the countryside. Resistance fighters, called mujahideen (holy warriors), saw the Christian or atheist Soviets controlling Afghanistan as a defilement of Islam as well as of their traditional culture. Proclaiming a "jihad" (holy war), they gained the support of the Islamic world (Jacobs and Zhang).

The United States gave Afghanistan weapons and money. The mujahideen employed guerrilla tactics against the Soviets. They would attack or raid quickly, then disappear into the mountains, causing great destruction without pitched battles. The

fighters used whatever weapons they could take from the Soviets or were given by the United States (Jacobs and Zhang).

Decentralized and scattered around Afghanistan, the mujahidiin were like a poisonous snake without a head that could be cut off. There was no one strong central stronghold from which resistance operated (Jacobs and Zhang).

The Soviet invasion had a devastating effect on the Afghan people. Because the rural population fed and housed the mujahidiin, the Soviets tried to eliminate or remove civilian populations from the countryside where resistance was based. Soviet bombing destroyed entire villages, crops and irrigation, leaving millions of people dead, homeless or starving. Land mines maimed unsuspecting Afghans, especially children who mistook them for toys. Refugee camps around Peshawar, Pakistan sprang up and quickly became overcrowded, unsanitary and insufficiently supplied. In addition, many internal refugees fled from their region (Jacobs and Zhang).

The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan elicited a strong reaction from all over the world. The United States condemned the occupation immediately and sent hundreds of millions of dollars worth of guns and food to Afghanistan to aid the mujahidiin and the refugees. The United Nations voted to condemn the action, and repeatedly exhorted the Soviets to pull out. Throughout the Arab world, people gave money and aided the mujahidiin. One of the benefactors of the war was Osama bin Laden.

The Soviets tried for a decade to gain control over the whole country and its people. The invasion was a failure; costing thousands of lives and having serious consequences still felt today.

To better understand the reason for the Soviet invasion and failure, first one must understand the geography and culture in Afghanistan. The land is mountainous and arid; jagged, impassable ranges divide the country, making travel difficult (Jacobs and Zhang).

Due to these physical divisions, the people are extremely provincial, with more loyalty to their specific clan or ethnic group than to a government or a country. The people are Muslims, and extremely religious and conservative. The majority ethnic group is the Pashtun, but there are over ten minority groups (Jacobs and Zhang).

Starting in the 1950s, the Soviets began giving aid to Afghanistan. The Soviets built roads, irrigation and even some oil pipelines. In the 1970s, a Communist party overthrew the monarchy and tried to institute social reforms. The rural populations saw land distribution and women's rights as alien to their traditional Islamic culture, a culture in which polygamy, covering of women and blood for blood practices is accepted. The Communist governments in Kabul in the 1970s lacked the popular support of the rural population (Jacobs and Zhang).

Understanding the events of December 1979 and the timing of the Soviet invasion does not totally elucidate why the Soviets believed it necessary to use force in Afghanistan (Collins 123).

During the invasion, the resistance forces to the new government began. This resistance was fragmented by Afghan society namely the mujahidiin guerrillas, the Islamic Fundamentalists and the Traditionalists. The resistance was divided along tribal, ethnic, regional, religious and ideological lines. This resistance remained a formidable movement, capable of denying the Soviet regime control of as much as eighty percent of

the countryside. The total number of mujahidiin was difficult to estimate (Nyrop and Seekins 334).

The Traditionalists known as the National Islamic Front was led by Pir Sayyid Gilani. It had its strongest support in the areas around the cities of Qandahar, Kabul and among tribal Pashtuns living in the border regions in Ghazni and Vardak provinces. Politically, it was conservative, and the leadership had close ties to the former royal family. Gilani's authority derived from his status as a Sufi religious leader. He was an undynamic individual with little knowledge or understanding of military tactics. His attempts to introduce a military command structure and ranks among the Pashtun tribesmen in the early 1980s ended in disaster (Nyrop and Seekins 335-336).

Another traditionalist group known as the National Liberation Front was led by Sibaghatullah Mojdeddi. It had an organized strength of between 8,000 and 15,000 men. It concentrated mostly in the Jalalabd, Lowgar, and Qandahar areas. Most of the followers were tribal Pashtuns and its political views were similar to those of the National Islamic Front (Nyrop and Seekins 336).

The Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Muhammand Nabi Muhammadi was the largest traditionalist group, with a membership ranging from 10,000 to 25,000 men. Like the other groups, its following was primarily Pashtun tribe. The movement was active militarily in Ghazi, Vardak, Badakhshan, Konarha, Lowgar and Baghlan provinces. The group was weakened militarily and politically by the defection of two groups to the fundamentalist camp, but still considered militarily the most effective of the traditionalist parties (Nyrop and Seekins 336).

Whereas the armed strength of the traditionalist parties tended to be organized in loose networks of adherents, the four Islamic fundamentalist parties had relatively coherent command structures that made them more effective militarily. The largest and most powerful fundamentalist party was the Hezb-i Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. In the mid 1980s, the number of its armed men was estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000. Hikmatyar, a Pushtun, was known as a ruthless leader. Rumors circulated that he had ties with Shia pro-Iranian groups and even the PDPA regime. His group received arms and other forms of aid from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and China. The Hezb-i Islami was strongest in Paktia, Konarha, Badakhshan, Nangarhar, and Baghlan provinces (Nyrop and Seekins 336).

Relations between Hikmatyar's group and the Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society) of Burhannudin Rabbani were tense in the mid-1980s due to a long-standing rivalry. Hikmatyar's forces, on several occasions, blocked supply routes to the Panjsher Valley, where mujahidiin, loyal to the Jamiat-i-Islami were based. The Jamiat-i-Islami had between 15,000 and 25,000 armed adherents. Rabbani was a Tajik, and his following included such non-Pashtun groups as Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. Its strongest contingents were located in the Dari-speaking regions of Afghanistan (Nyrop and Seekinss 336-337).

The Hezb-i Islami (Islamic Party) was led by Yunis Khales. His group was small, comprising between 5,000 and 7,000 armed adherents. Despite its size, it had a reputation for good organization and fighting effectiveness (Nyrop and Seekins 337).

The Ittehad-e Islami led by Abdul Rasool Sayyaf had an undetermined number of adherents. Although Sayyaf had access to arms and funds from Arab countries and by

virtue of this was named head of the coalition of four major and three minor fundamentalist parties, his following was small and confined for the most part, near Kabul (Nyrop and Seekins 337).

The mujahidiin's tactics indicate a three pronged strategy, according to military analyst, Imtiaz H. Bokhari. First, was to prove by large scale sabotage that the government at Kabul is not in control of the country; second, to alienate support of the government by assassinations, arson, and looting; and third, to weaken the army by inciting defections and discouraging fresh recruitments. Few mujahidiin believed that by such tactics alone the Soviets could be driven out of their country or the PDPA regime overthrown. Rather, what was involved was a war of attrition that would end, guerrillas swore, only when the last of them was killed (Nyrop and Seekins 337-338).

The mujahidiin began by using traditional fighting tactics; large groups of mujahidiin launching attacks against fortified points which proved to be ineffective and costly in lives. In time, they refined and diversified their tactics. They staged ambushes of convoys or enemy troop contingents, destroyed ridges and electric and telephone lines, and laid mines on highways and other open areas where enemy troops and vehicles were expected to pass. Armed with antique rifles, the guerrillas gradually obtained more sophisticated weapons. These weapons included British, Chinese, and Soviet manufactured mortars, Soviet antitank rocket launchers, Chinese-made plastic-covered mines, and a few SAM-7 missiles. The Most urgent need of the mujahidiin was for portable, heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles that could be used against the Soviets' Mi-24 helicopters (Nyrop and Seekins 338).

The most complete historical account of the resistance in a single province came from a medical doctor (probably French), who served with the resistance in Lowgar province for five months in 1982. The account describes the rise and decline of the resistance from 1979 through 1982. The resistance was triggered by opposition to the DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) land reform program. The uprising led to the destruction of government offices, razing of government schools because of Marxist teaching, and killing of party member which led to the stop of the land reform program. Most of the Lowgar province became under the control of the resistance. Local resistance leaders were offered material and other assistance by the Peshawar-based resistance organizations. When the Kabul government administration was expelled, the province was run by the local people. The mujahadiin guerrillas lived among the civilian populace, which made it difficult for the Soviets to identify them (Amstutz 411).

In 1981, the second year of the Soviet occupation, the Peshawar-based groups expanded their influence in the area. This influence reached the point that four Peshawar organizations had affiliations with different guerrilla groups; two gaining support from the majority Pushtun tribal elements and the other two from the minorities, which carried out joint guerrilla operations. In July 1982, the Soviets and the DRA army launched an effective counterinsurgency action in the province of Lowgar, using the encirclement tactic. More than 200 mujahadiin were killed, and the Soviets achieved one of their most successful counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan. The people in Lowgar province lost confidence in the resistance groups and general morale. In the spring of 1983, the resistance in Lowgar province recovered. Well-armed groups appeared with more vigor

to fight. This time they were more effective and proved once again to be a strong resistance (Amstutz 412-413).

The American involvement in Afghanistan began in 17 December 1979 at a meeting of National Security Advisors, where it was decided to provide more support to the rebels. On 21 December 1979, the Carter administration started providing reports to the media about the military buildup in Afghanistan. The main job of the U.S. would be to start a propaganda campaign against the Soviets; to bring to the world attention, the anti Muslim operations by the Soviets.

The council decided to "make it as expensive as possible" for the Soviets (Gates 146). All of the actions taken by the U.S. were with third world countries and no public acknowledgement was made of any operations. On 24 December 1979, President Carter chaired a meeting of the National Security Council and they all knew that a new front was now open in the cold war.

Zbigniew Brzezinski made the statement with a letter to President Carter that the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was good because we could give the Soviets their Vietnam. Brzezinski also stated that he welcomed the opportunity to lure the Soviets "into the Afghan trap" (Brzezinski 427).

In March 1985, President Ronald Reagan signed a directive - NSDD 16, entitled "Expanded U.S. aid to Afghan guerrillas", (Gates 146) with a 16-page annex laying down tasks for the CIA. During the Reagan administration, the U.S provided the mujahidiin rebels billions of dollars in aid and high-tech weaponry, including stinger missiles which helped the Muslim guerrillas overthrow the Soviet backed Afghan government.

Stinger missiles were originally given only to Pakistan to help them defend their borders, but the rebels complained that the weapons supplied to them were inefficient to bring down the helicopters and aircraft being used against them in the mountain regions.

The U.S. was proud of the accomplishments of the mujahidiin rebels in bringing down the Soviets, the problem was that they did not stay in power that long after the Soviet pull-out. The U.S. provided the weapons the Afghan people needed to secure their independence.

Sixty percent of the world's heroin comes from Afghanistan. The CIA watched and even provided vehicles to the smugglers in the remote mountain regions. Both the Northern alliance and Osama bin Laden used the profits from opium sales to fund their efforts.

The Reagan Doctrine was successful in providing the weapons required to push the Soviets out, but the lack of economic, medical, and humanitarian relief caused the rebels to look for help elsewhere. To make up for lack of press coverage, the Reagan administration allocated \$500,000 to help exiled Afghans set up a press service and provide the world with front line coverage.

Both the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda evolved out of the CIA supported mujahidiin rebel movement. After 9/11, a Soviet General with combat experience in Afghanistan reminded the U.S. public "let us not forget that (bin Laden) was created by your special services to fight against our Soviet troops, but he got out of your control" (Cogan 76).

In Washington, a spokesperson for the State Department, Glyn Davies, announced the official American reaction: "We hope this presents an opportunity for a process of

national reconciliation to begin" (Gates 146). The initial reaction to the Taliban takeover was positive.

The Clinton administration saved the Taliban regime when it was weakest. In 1996, the Taliban was overextended and thousands of their best fighters were captured by the Northern Alliance. Just when the Northern Alliance was about to attack, President Clinton dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Inderfurth and Bill Richardson to convince the northern alliance not to attack.

The cease-fire that followed allowed the now Pakistani and Saudi backed Afghanistan to regroup and re-arm. The CIA and other U.S. intelligence services left the Northern Alliance in the dark until the Taliban was totally restored, and it was too late. The U.S. backed arms embargo on the Northern Alliance was enforced during this time.

The Clinton administration ordered a cruise missile attack on one of Osama bin Laden's camps, in reaction to the U.S. embassy bombings. The following year, U.N. sanctions were enacted against Afghanistan. The sanctions made Osama bin Laden's position even stronger because of his wealth.

The U.S. intelligence services fought a private war against Osama bin Laden for years, and knew of his location many times. Each time the CIA wanted to attack, they were told not to. The price for not assassinating Osama bin Laden is evident today.

American tolerance of the Taliban was publicly and inextricably linked to the financial goals of an oil corporation. UNOCAL intended to build gas and oil pipelines in Afghanistan, when the situation allowed.

The National Security Advisor thought that the fall of the Soviet Union was much more important than creating the Taliban. The thought at the time was that the freedom of central Europe was more important than “stirring up a few Muslims” (Cogan 76).

On 15 February 1989, the international press was shuttled from nearby Temez, in the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, to a special press center, complete with a new, covered pavilion. The body of a Soviet army minesweeper was quietly carried across the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Dar'ya (the river that forms the border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan). That blanket-wrapped form was the last Russian soldier killed in Afghanistan; his name was Igor Liakhovich (Borovik 178). The cameras of several dozen news services zoomed in on the center of the bridge, where a lone Soviet tank pulled to a halt. The commander of the Soviet 40th Army in Afghanistan, General Boris Gromov, climbed down from the turret and walked the last hundred yards toward the Soviet side of the river. Just before he reached the end of the bridge, his 14-year-old son Maksim greeted him with a stiff embrace. Father and son marched out of Afghanistan together, thus ending the decade long direct Soviet military involvement in that country.

As the 1990s began with great hope elsewhere in the world, Afghanistan was emerging as a failed state. As it collapsed and spun wildly into anarchy, it was becoming home to a new and little-understood threat; the aggrieved Islamic extremist. The United States government failed to grasp the severity of the events unfolding in Afghanistan. The United States, the most powerful supporter of the Afghan mujahidiin, turned its back, rather than provide assistance for rebuilding Afghanistan. Whereas in the 1980s, the war

in Afghanistan attracted attention and aid, the moment the Soviets withdrew their troops in 1989, Afghanistan dropped off the radar screen.

President Bush called the unfolding events in Eastern Europe, the emergence of the "New World Order." The Soviets exited from Afghanistan in February 1989, and in May 1989, the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe started to lift. Hungary opened its border with Austria without fear of Soviet intervention. That single act was followed a month later by the stunning election of a Solidarity majority in Poland's parliament, ending nearly a half century of communist rule. Throughout the summer of 1989, East Germany was simmering; the people took to the streets, and on the night of November 9th, the Berlin wall was breached and Germans surged from east to west. The world was caught by surprise in December when Czech playwright, Valclav Havel and his band of dissidents from the Magic Lantern Theater, carried out their own "Velvet Revolution."

As the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in early 1989, the country collapsed into virtual anarchy. Different factions of the mujahidiin struggled for power in the countryside, while the government of Muhammad Najibullah; the last Soviet installed president controlled Kabul. Eventually, in April 1992, Kabul fell to the mujahidiin, but the civil war continued unabated. Old hatreds and ethnic rivalries once again created chaos, and without the unifying presence of foreign armies on Afghan soil, the state of Afghanistan simply fell apart. The war in Afghanistan continued with horrendous brutality; Afghanistan was in ruins, completely devastated by a decade long conflict. The war in Afghanistan had forced half of the Afghan population to become refugees, took over a million lives, and shattered the economic, social, and political system of the country (Nojumi 223).

What Afghanistan needed now was foreign support. Yet, the United States, with its Cold War won and its mission of forcing the Soviets to withdraw, lost interest in Afghanistan. U.S. economic and military assistance to Afghanistan decreased dramatically after 1989, and no provisions were made for rebuilding the nation, demobilizing fighters or organizing relief aid (Rashid 176).

Washington instead left its allies in the region, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, to sort out the mess, giving them free reign to do so. "There was no American policy on Afghan politics at that time, only the defacto promotions of Pakistani goals as carried out by Pakistani intelligence" (Coll 169). To many Afghans, the US inaction constituted a major betrayal, while Washington's refusal to harness international pressure to help broker a settlement between the warlords was considered a double betrayal (Rashid 176). The absence of the U.S. had the effect of leaving a major power vacuum, creating a situation which lent itself to more chaos, destruction, and infighting amongst Afghanistan's many warlords who went all out to consolidate their own individual power, and proved unable to unite the country (Rashid 185).

This situation continued in Afghanistan until 1994, when a new group, the Taliban (Pashtun for "students"), emerged on the scene. The Taliban came together in the madrassas, set up by the Pakistani government along the Afghan border and funded by the U.S., Britain, and the Saudis. In the madrassas, students received theological indoctrination and military training. Thousands of young men, refugees, and orphans from the war in Afghanistan became the foot soldiers of this movement. Taking advantage of Afghanistan's political chaos, the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 and declared themselves the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

At first, the Taliban appealed to many Afghans with their promise of peaceful rule and their avowal to end the corruption, feuding, and bedlam that defined the country. But as they rose in popularity, so did their level of extremism. Armed and inflamed by religious zeal, the Taliban intensified in violence and in their intolerance for anything other than their extremist Islam policies. The training grounds that the CIA built, maintained and operated during the Afghanistan Civil War soon became camps and refuges for Islamic militant, amongst them the Arab volunteers. Though the CIA forecasted repeatedly during this period that postwar Afghanistan was going to be an awful mess; the CIA and others in Washington discounted warnings from the Soviet leadership about the rise of Islamic radicalism in Afghanistan (Coll 168).

Throughout the Islamic World, the call to jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan had attracted young volunteers. From the Arab countries and beyond, thousands of young men traveled to Pakistan to take up arms and crossed the border to fight against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. Some were genuine volunteers on missions of humanitarian value, others were adventure-seekers looking for a path to glory, and some were straight psychopaths. As war dragged on through the 1980s, a number of Arab states discreetly emptied their prisons of homegrown troublemakers and sent them off to the jihad with the hope that they might never return. In the training camps along the Afghan, Pakistani border, these radicals studied, trained and fought together. As they fought the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, they forged tactical and ideological links that would serve them well in the future (Rasid 130).

Saudi Arabia dispatched Saudi Islamists to Afghanistan and Pakistan so that they could be kept away from Saudi Arabia itself (Bodansky 18). Amongst them was a young

Saudi student Osama bin Laden, son of a Saudi billionaire. Osama's father backed the Afghan struggle and helped fund it. In 1986, Osama bin Laden set up his own training camp for the Arab volunteers in Afghanistan and was now viewed by the Arab fighters as their leader. Bin Laden's charity organizations were most active in the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan along the Afghan border, where a generation of youngsters was coming of age while studying in the madrassas bin Laden helped establish. These madrassas in those squalid camps taught students the strictest fundamentalism of Wahhabi Islam. The lesson being taught to the students was that all Muslims must fulfill their obligation of jihad both in global causes, in Afghanistan, and in the defense of their oppressed Muslim brothers by fighting the secular regimes at home (Bodansky 19).

The United States, in 1989, forced its cold war enemy out of Afghanistan, but the decade long conflict would also leave behind its legacy. The legacy was scores of armed, well trained Islamic radicals, an international apparatus for, and network of terrorists, and a growing anti-American sentiment.

The nineteen hijackers were all Arabs and not Afghans, so where is the Afghan connection to the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001? Well, it took a few days to register that the whole thing was based in the mountains of Afghanistan (Crile 508). For most Americans, the events of 9/11 were quickly tied to Afghanistan when it was learned that the hijackers had all spent time there. The Taliban government was protecting Osama bin Laden and had allowed Afghanistan to become training grounds for Islamic fundamentalists.

While news reports explored every possible avenue that might explain our new enemy, there was very little information on the role that the United States played in

Afghanistan's recent past. The fact that the CIA had supported the Afghans in their guerrilla war against the Soviet Union was mentioned, but the scope and nature of the CIA's role in Afghan jihad was left out. Afghanistan was the largest and most successful covert operation ever mounted by the CIA. The scope and nature of this campaign had not registered in the consciousness of most Americans, nor was it understood that such secret undertakings inevitably have unforeseen and unintended consequences.

After the Soviets withdrew, the dark side of America's Afghan adventure began. After their withdrawal, the Soviet government was pumping an estimated \$3 billion a year into Afghanistan to prop up the puppet government of President Najibullah. The CIA, with Saudi matching funds, maintained the enormous flow of weapons and cash to the Afghan resistance groups. When these resistance factions turned on each other after the fall of Najibullah's government, they were armed with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and explosives of every conceivable type, provided by the United States. The United States government also chose to back the Taliban's rise to power in the mid 1990s and saw nothing objectionable in the Taliban's plan to impose strict Islamic law in Afghanistan. As the Taliban regime deprived the citizens of Afghanistan of basic human rights and allowed Osama bin Ladin to operate training camps for his Al Qaeda recruits, the United States government concerned itself with economic gains in the region. U.S. oil companies were interested in gaining access to the huge oil and natural gas reserves in the former Soviet Republics bordering the Caspian Sea and in Central Asia.

Afghanistan itself has no known oil or gas reserves, but it is an attractive route for pipelines leading to Pakistan, India, and the Arabian Sea. In the mid 1990s, a consortium

led by the California based UNACOL Corporation proposed a \$4.5 billion oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. This would require a stable central government in Afghanistan; thus began several years in which United States policy in the region centered on “romancing the Taliban” (Gasper 9).

While the United States was courting the Taliban regime, in May 1996, Bin Laden moved his operation to Jalalabad, Afghanistan. For over five years, in return for financial support of the Taliban regime, Al Qaeda received the Taliban’s hospitality and loyalty (Stern 254). According to author Jessica Stern; “Al Qaeda was very important for the Taliban because they had so much money, they gave a lot of money and the Taliban trusted them” (Stern 254). In February 1997, Osama bin Laden declared jihad against the United States and issued the call to arms; “I confirm that all the youth and the whole nation should concentrate their efforts on the Americans and the Zionists” (Bodansky 199).

So what were the mistakes that the United States made in Afghanistan? Author, John K. Cooley, describes American policies in Afghanistan as “America’s love affair with Islam” (Cooley xiv). Of course, in the light of the attacks of 9/11, we know that this is a love affair that went disastrously wrong. Did the CIA in the 1980s consider the consequences of bringing together thousands of Islamic radicals from all over the world? As mentioned previously, Islamic radicals forged tactical and ideological links as they fought the Soviets; they also accepted Osama bin Laden as their leader and became the foot soldiers of Al Qaeda.

The United States ignored the plight of the Afghans after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and allowed the fighting to continue. If the world, especially the United States,

mediated an end to hostilities in Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew and provided economical support to build that country, history might have turned out differently. The United States' pull-out created a power vacuum in Afghanistan. The Afghans did not have the resources to put the country back on its feet, making it vulnerable to the interference of neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan.

The end of war in Afghanistan left behind a coalition of Islamic organizations intent on promoting radical Islam against all non-Muslim forces. It also left a legacy of expert and experienced fighters, training camps and logistical facilities, elaborate Trans-Islam networks of personal and organization relationships. A substantial amount of military equipment was in the hands of Islamic radicals, including 300 to 500 unaccounted stinger missiles, and most importantly, a sense of power and self-confidence over what they have achieved. There was a driving desire to take on the other super power, a belief that God will provide other victories.

Some may oppose the idea that American policies in Afghanistan led to the attack on America that occurred on September 11, 2001. The United States has never been hit like that on its home turf. The attack was a totally unexpected, unprovoked attack, killing many thousands of people and demolishing two of the largest symbols of America. The idea of American invulnerability, of being a separate island safe and immune from all the world's problems was shattered (socialist 7). The terrorist attacks were a measure of the depth of anger in the Middle East and many other parts of the world towards the United States. There is tremendous anger throughout the Arab world over the decade -long US-backed sanctions against Iraq, estimated to have taken the lives of over one million Iraqis, 500,000 of them children. In a 1995 interview, then-Secretary of State Madeline Albright

defended the sanctions and the mass deaths that flowed from them by saying “the cost, we think, is worth it” (socialist 9). The goal of the attacks was to undermine US domination over the world, to expose the failure of US imperialism and global capitalism to solve the world’s problems, and to show that the US military was completely incapable of stopping the terrorists (socialist 2).

In conclusion, the successful September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and damaged the Pentagon, killing over 3,000 people combined. The attack was one of the most pivotal events in world history, and its impact will be felt for years to come. The US involvement in Afghanistan had a clear impact on the Taliban and Al Queda in Afghanistan.

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